

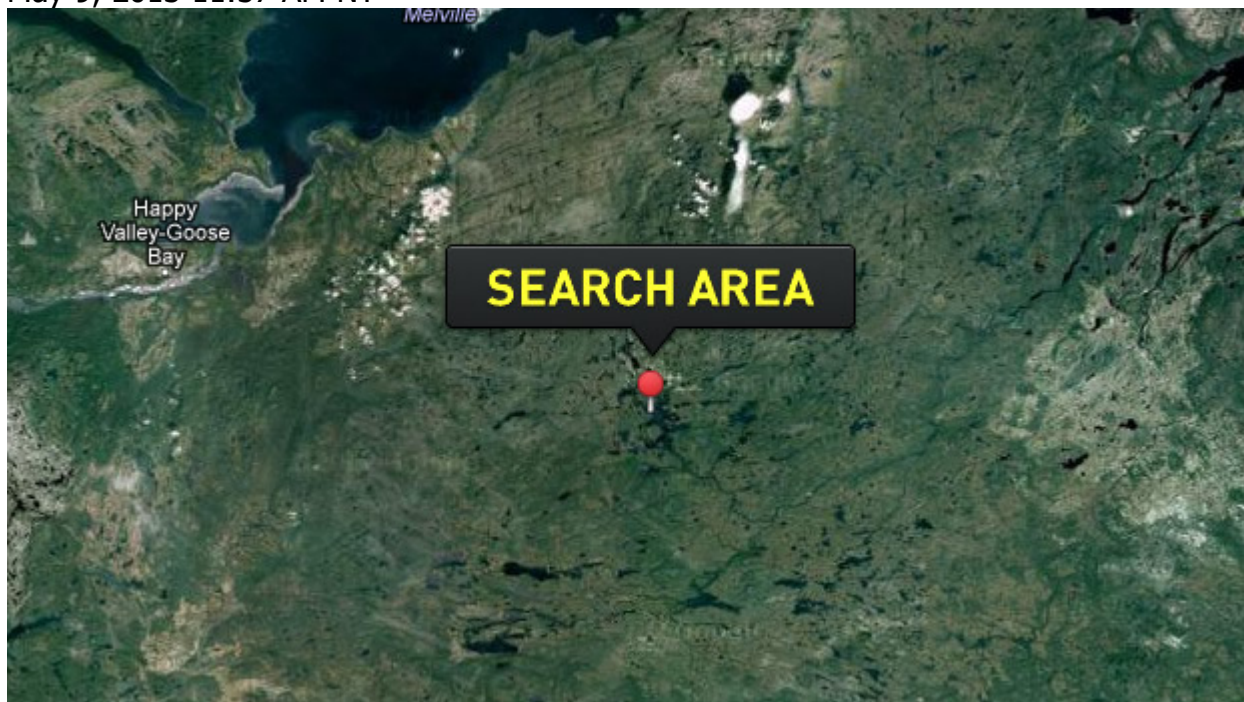


***Aboriginal news from across Turtle Island and beyond
May 6-10, 2013***

Body of former Innu leader recovered from Labrador pond

[CBC News](#)

May 9, 2013 11:37 AM NT



*A search was launched in a remote part of the Labrador wilderness on Wednesday night after a canoe capsized.
(Google Maps)*

Police in Happy Valley-Goose Bay said they have recovered the body of a man whose canoe capsized in frigid water in central Labrador on Wednesday night.

RCMP aren't confirming who it is, but former Innu president David Nuke has confirmed to CBC News that it is former Innu Nation Grand Chief Joseph Riche.

Riche was part of a group of four hunters who were in an area known as Park Lake, which is home to a fly-in fishing lodge. The pond is about 80 kilometres southeast of Happy Valley-Goose Bay.



Joseph Riche, a former grand chief of the Innu Nation, played a key role in finalizing the New Dawn land claims agreement. (CBC)

Riche was alone in the canoe at the time, although another man required medical attention, authorities said.

Riche was grand chief of the Innu Nation when members voted in 2011 to approve the New Dawn land claims deal, which among other things included compensation for lands flooded in the 1960s for the Upper Churchill hydroelectric project. It also cleared a major hurdle for the Lower Churchill hydro project outside Happy Valley-Goose Bay.

The Joint Rescue Co-ordination Centre in Halifax received a call for help overnight, and dispatched a Cormorant helicopter from Gander.

"While en route, the crew was advised that in addition to the search, they would need to medevac a survivor dealing with a diabetic emergency," said CBC News reporter Matt McCann. The survivor requiring medical aid was flown to an ambulance that took him to hospital in Happy Valley-Goose Bay.

A search of the area found no sign overnight of Riche, RCMP said, and a ground search continued on Thursday.

RCMP "are now focusing their efforts on the recovery of the missing person," the force said in a statement.

Another helicopter was on the scene on Thursday to help ground crews.

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Community walk to raise awareness of sexual exploitation

[CBC News](#)

May 5, 2013

A group of Aboriginal youth in Winnipeg is taking part in a traditional smudge ceremony Sunday, in hopes of bringing an uplifting message to young girls who are being sexually exploited.



Organizers have also planned a community walk and said it was important for people of all backgrounds to take part in the smudge ceremony.

vana Yellowback said she has a special reason to take part in the event. Her cousins were victimized by the sex trade.

"It made me worry," said Yellowback. "I'd see these girls and I'd think about my cousins

when they're out there and it just made me worry and just like, you know, maybe they're going to pick up a John or somebody that's going to really hurt them really bad."

Smudging is a spiritual way to cleanse and remove negativity, which is needed in Winnipeg, said Yellowback.

"We're trying to smudge the streets," she said. "In a way to kind of cleanse the streets, to get rid of that negativity and to also put that love there."

The All Nations Medicine Walk gets started at noon at Thunderbird House.

Statistics show that about 70 to 80 per cent of children and youth exploited in Manitoba are of Aboriginal descent.

In Newfoundland, too many want recognition as Mi'kmaq Indians, federal government says

[Toronto Star](#)

May 5, 2013

Sandro Contenta

Ottawa scrambles to renegotiate 2008 deal after 100,000 people register as Mi'kmaq to receive benefits under agreement with Federation of Newfoundland Indian



Qalipu (Mi'kmaq) Chief Brendan Sheppard says it is not reasonable to expect 100,000 applicants for his band.



"You don't set up the criteria, have people apply and then say, 'Oops, too many people applied so we're going to change the rules.' That's simply not fair." -Hector Pearce

Newfoundlander who has found his Mi'kmaq roots

Hector Pearce found the link to his aboriginal ancestry on a tombstone near Bonne Bay, a stunning inlet in Newfoundland's Gros Morne National Park.

The dates marking the birth and death of Sarah Welsh confirmed she was Pearce's great grandmother. They also confirmed she was the granddaughter of John Matthews, a Mi'kmaq Indian born in 1780 in Cape La Hune on the island's southern coast. Matthews, in other words, was Pearce's great, great, great grandfather. The tombstone testified to an Indian bloodline Pearce suspected, for the first time, only five years ago.

"When I was growing up, no one talked about it," says Pearce, 68. "My grandmother resembled very well a Mi'kmaq in her skin colour and her high cheekbones. But she never mentioned it. And my mother, a very intelligent person who knew all about our family tree and the community's social history, never spoke of it either. "Those generations were a bit ashamed to articulate that connection with the Mi'kmaq," he says in a phone interview from Lewisporte, north of Gander.

Pearce, a retired psychologist, spent six months compiling evidence of his Indian ancestry, including all the birth, death and marriage certificates he could find. He then applied, before last November's deadline, for official recognition as a Mi'kmaq Indian under an agreement between the federal government and the Federation of Newfoundland Indians.

Pearce was one of many. And that's where the trouble begins.

About 100,000 people have applied for Mi'kmaq [Indian](#) status — a number so high it has sent the federal government scrambling to renegotiate a deal it signed less than five years ago. (The number of federally registered Indians in Canada, according to the 2006 census, is 698,000.)

Conservative MP Greg Rickford, parliamentary secretary to the minister of aboriginal affairs, made clear during a March 28 debate that the government smells something fishy.

"It is simply not reasonable to expect that there would be more than 100,000 credible applications to be members of the Qalipu (Mi'kmaq) band," Rickford told the House of Commons. "That would be over four times the original estimated number.

"These figures are all the more questionable since it has become clear that many of the late stage of applications appear to no longer reside in that province."

Rickford made much of the need to ensure "the integrity of the enrolment process." He also noted that taxpayers' dollars are at stake. Under the 2008 agreement, those who receive Indian status — and their descendents — will be eligible for federal payments for post-secondary education and noninsured health benefits, including vision and dental care.

The renegotiation is backed by the chief of the Qalipu Mi'kmaq First Nation Band, established under the same federal agreement in 2011. Chief Brendan Sheppard, [in a recent post on the band's website](#), echoed Rickford's concerns, saying it was "neither reasonable nor credible to expect more than 100,000 applications to be members of the Qalipu band."

That has made thousands of would-be Indians, including Pearce, mighty mad. "You don't set up the criteria, have people apply and then say, 'Oops, too many people applied so we're going to change the rules.' That's simply not fair," Pearce says. "We didn't set up the criteria, they did."

Making matters worse, Pearce says, is that more than 23,000 people have already received Mi'kmaq Indian status under the criteria the government suddenly wants renegotiated. Why should more than 70,000 remaining applicants be treated differently?

"It's a real mess, to say the least," says Pearce, who recently helped set up [Qalipu Watchdogs, a group representing](#) many of those left in limbo.

The issue dates back to 1949, when Newfoundland and Labrador joined Confederation — a deal with no specific arrangement for the province's aboriginal people.

"In the case of the Mi'kmaq, (then-premier Joey) Smallwood told the federal government there were no Indians on the island of Newfoundland," says Adrian Tanner, a Memorial University anthropologist.

"This could have been deliberate, Smallwood might not have wanted to bother with a group who might interfere with his development plans; or it might have been Smallwood's ignorance, which is hard to believe as he had an encyclopedic mania for Newfoundland facts.

"But on the west coast many of the Mi'kmaq anglicized their names, hid their identity, and tried to avoid being called racist slurs, such as "Jack-a-tar." However, at the time of Confederation, it would not have taken much effort for Smallwood to have found some Mi'kmaq population," Tanner says in an email.

Aboriginal people have been lobbying for their rights ever since.

In 2005, the federal and provincial governments signed a land claim agreement with the Labrador Inuit — about 5,300 people — covering 72,500 square kilometres. In 2011, the governments signed a land claim deal with leaders representing 2,400 Innu Indians of Labrador.

There is one Mi'kmaq reserve for a separate band at Conne River. Accounts of the Mi'kmaq presence in Newfoundland go back to at least the early 1600s. Allied with the French, their fortunes took a turn for the worse when the British gained Newfoundland and much of present-day Nova Scotia under the Treaty of Utrecht in 1713. Many were pushed out of Nova Scotia.

In Newfoundland, the Mi'kmaq were concentrated on the western coast — known as the “French Shore” — where the French retained fishing rights. But smaller communities could be found hunting, fishing and gathering all over the island, says Angela Robinson, a Memorial University anthropologist who has extensively researched the Mi'kmaq.

Generations of prejudice, marginalization and intermarriage followed. Hiding Indian ancestry became so common that, at some point, whole family histories were buried and forgotten. Families “would be highly insulted if you said they were aboriginal,” Robinson says.

Then came the 1970s, when demands for native [rights](#) across North America — including the deadly showdown at Wounded Knee in South Dakota — triggered what eventually become known in Newfoundland as “the awakening.”

Roots and pride were rediscovered, although it wasn't always easy.

“If someone taps you on the shoulder and says, ‘Were you aware you have aboriginal ancestry?’ You suddenly have to come to terms with a different aspect of who you are as a person,” Robinson says.

In 1989, the Federation of Newfoundland Indians launched a Federal Court case seeking recognition under the Indian Act. The federal government then agreed to talks and [a deal was ratified in 2008](#). Prime Minister Stephen Harper flew to Newfoundland to announce and praise the agreement.

It recognizes the Mi'kmaq as a band with no land or reserve. People applying to be registered as Indians under federal law do not have to meet a “blood quantum,” used by governments in the past to determine the degree of ancestry. They have to prove they are of “Canadian Indian ancestry.” They also have to prove they were members of a Mi'kmaq community before 1949 or descendents of someone who was.

"The terms of inclusion in this band were quite broad," Robinson says, insisting that, given the extent of intermarriage and the large size of Newfoundland families, few should be surprised at the numbers that applied for recognition.

"The majority of people outside of St. John's do have aboriginal ancestry," Robinson says.

Rickford, parliamentary secretary to Aboriginal Affairs Minister Bernard Valcourt, has noted that when the deal was signed, the federal government and the Federation of Newfoundland Indians both estimated the Mi'kmaq band would number from 8,700 to 12,000 members.

That made sense, Rickford added, because the 2006 census found there were about 23,450 residents of Newfoundland and Labrador who identified themselves as aboriginals — a term that covers Inuit, North American Indians and Metis. Of those, only 7,765 identified themselves as members of a First Nation.

Rickford complained that two-thirds of the 100,000 who applied don't even live in Newfoundland. But the agreement the federal government signed does not restrict status to those living in the province.

Last November, the government appointed lawyer Fred Caron to work with band leaders to tighten enrolment guidelines. That turned into full-blown negotiations when the 2008 agreement expired in March.

"We're still in the process of negotiating a new agreement," says Janet McAuley, the band's executive assistant. Sheppard, the band's chief, did not respond to requests for an interview.

Rickford said the goal of negotiations is "to find a solution that treats all applicants fairly and equally, reflects the original intent of the agreement and, of course, ensures the integrity of the enrolment process."

Gerry Byrne, Liberal MP for the Newfoundland riding of Humber-St. Barbe-Baie Verte, has introduced a motion in parliament calling on the agreement to be extended and remaining applicants to be assessed under current criteria. Byrne, who has applied for Indian status under the deal, notes the committee assessing applications has always included two federal government representatives. After four years of enforcing the agreement's enrolment criteria, the government has suddenly disowned the process and tried to paint applicants as frauds, Byrne charges.

"Instead of saying, 'We didn't know what we were doing and we signed something we regret,' the government is now saying, 'It's the applicant's fault,'" Byrne says in an interview.

Byrne also challenges chief Sheppard, insisting he has no band mandate to renegotiate the agreement. A change in enrolment criteria, Byrne warns, could result in some of the 23,000 already approved as Mi'kmaq getting their Indian status revoked.

Tanner, the anthropologist, argues the agreement's concept of an Indian band without land paved the way for suspicions of taxpayers being had.

"The landless band concept is flawed because, without land and community, it looks to the public like just another handout, and plays into the anti-aboriginal backlash," Tanner says.

As a federally recognized band, the Mi'kmaq will receive funding for economic development. But without a land base, its individual members won't get the tax breaks of Indians who live on reserves.

Pearce, the would-be Mi'kmaq, laments media coverage he claims generally portrays applicants as "a bunch of Newfoundlanders that are just interested in becoming a member of this band so they can derive all these benefits from the federal government."

"Most people I meet will say, 'Yes, there may be some benefits there for my kids or my grandkids as far as university education is concerned but, really, I'm interested in my family ancestry and I'd like to establish the fact that it was Mi'kmaq.'"

If there are cheats, it's up to the assessing committee to catch them, says Pearce. Pearce, who has two sons and six grandchildren, says his lobby group has repeated requested meetings with the federal government and Mi'kmaq band council but received no response. They've held two protests in front of the council's Corner Brook offices and are planning more.

An agreement celebrated as a cure for injustice is now the source of division and anger.

Tory MP Clarke's private member's bill to repeal sections of Indian Act could have unintended consequences, say critics

[Canada First Perspective](#)

06 May 2013 13:38

Bea Vondouangchanh

Under An Act to Amend Indian Act (Publication of Bylaws), bylaws, wills, and estates will no longer need approval from the Aboriginal Affairs minister, but the Canadian Bar Association says Sec. 7 of the bill will likely result in 'many harsh, unintended consequences' for First Nations peoples.

A low-profile but controversial private member's bill to repeal antiquated sections of the Indian Act will likely result "in many harsh, unintended consequences" for First Nations peoples, says the Canadian Bar Association and opposition MPs say it should be withdrawn.

"I think it's a deeply-flawed bill," NDP MP Jean Crowder (Nanaimo-Cowichan, B.C.) said last week about Bill C-428, an Act to amend the Indian Act (Publication of Bylaws) and to Provide for Its Replacement, which is currently being studied clause-by-clause at the House Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Committee. "It is actually removing some sections that haven't been used. I would say it's an empty attempt around change. It's not a meaningful change to the Indian Act," Ms. Crowder said.

Ms. Crowder, her party's aboriginal affairs critic, said that while there are some provisions such as eliminating references to residential schools which are important in the bill, it did not get proper consultation with First Nations, and is no different than the Indian Act that it is trying to amend.

"When the Indian Act was implemented, it was implemented unilaterally and was deemed as being paternalistic and a piece of legislation that was going to be in place until they dealt with the 'Indian problem' and here we've got an attempt by a government member to tinker with the Indian Act without the appropriate consultations. I don't know how it's different from one paternalistic approach to another," she said.

Assembly of First Nations British Columbia Regional Chief Jody Wilson-Raybould agreed that Bill C-428 was attempting to tinker with the Indian Act and changes should not be made piecemeal.

"Whether it's this bill or other bills that have been government led, it certainly raises issues and the reality of certain areas that need to be addressed by our nations, but not in a piecemeal or a tinkering way," she said. "What our nations are doing right across this country in varying ways is looking comprehensively at moving beyond the Indian Act, not specifically at jurisdictions that we could potentially decide to draw down or not, but at the ability and having success in creating the institutions of government that we need but don't exist right now, that are not defined in any way, shape, or form within the Indian Act. That's a lot of hard and tough work we're undertaking that we all need to know and recognize," she said.

Conservative MP Rob Clarke (Desnethé-Missinippi-Churchill River, Sask.) introduced the bill in June 2012. It received second reading on Dec. 5, 2012. The committee wrapped up hearing from witnesses last Thursday and began clause-by-clause consideration.

When he appeared before the committee to discuss his bill, Mr. Clarke said that as a member of the Muskeg Lake Cree Nation and former RCMP officer, he spent his career on reserves and enforcing the Indian Act.

"I spent almost half my life living and working on reserve. I was born under the Indian Act and no doubt will die under the Indian Act, but I don't want the Indian Act to follow me to my grave," he said. "As a veteran of the RCMP, with over 18 years of service, I spent the majority of my policing career living and policing on reserves. What bothered me was that I had to enforce this 137-year-old Indian Act and saw daily the impact that this antiquated, paternalistic, and racist legislation had on grassroots band members."

When it comes to consultations, Mr. Clarke said that as a private member, he did not have the "financial or human resources to conduct a full-scale consultation" but has engaged with First Nations communities for years who say that the Indian Act must be repealed.

"I have seen with my own eyes the harm this legislation has done. Bill C-428 is designed to mandate development of a process in which First Nations and Crown can work together on ways to review, repeal, and replace the Indian Act," he said. Bill C-428 would require the Minister of Indian and Northern Affairs to report to the House of Commons by Jan. 31 of each year what measures are being taken to work with First Nations organizations to develop new legislation to replace the Indian Act. It would also remove a provision that prevents First Nations from selling goods and agricultural products produced on reserves to non-band members, repeal a prohibition on employees of the Aboriginal Affairs Department from trading for profit with First Nations, and eliminate the section of the Indian Act which allows the Canadian government to establish residential schools.

Under Bill C-428, bylaws created on reserves would no longer need approval from the minister of Aboriginal Affairs, but would force First Nations to publish their entire band's bylaws in a newspaper, on the internet and in First Nations Gazette. The other major section of the private member's bill deals with wills, estates and eliminating the requirement for the minister of Aboriginal Affairs to approve or void wills and administer estates.

In his testimony, Mr. Clarke said that when he was an RCMP officer, he reviewed his will when two officers were fatally shot.

"I didn't know I had to get ministerial approval to verify my will. No one else here has to do that," he said. "I don't want ministerial approval to verify wills, to

authenticate them. I don't want the minister to make the decision, if my will is contested by individuals out there, on who gets what."

In its submission to the committee, the Canadian Bar Association said that most of the proposed amendments in the bill are "housekeeping" ones that should rightly be repealed. When it comes to the wills and estates section, however, the bill "will increase cost and complexity to Indian estates in Canada, particularly for rural, isolated communities. There will be no uniformity to the law what applies to on-reserve estates across the country," the CBA wrote. "As currently proposed, Sec. 7 of the bill will likely result in many harsh, unintended consequences for Indians." The CBA said that more consultation is needed for this section and that if the bill is to pass, it should be amended so that there is a transitional clause that states Sec. 7 will not come into effect until "Parliament has introduced companion legislation to fill the gaps created" by Bill C-428.

Liberal MP Carolyn Bennett (St. Paul's, Ont.) said the bill is not fixable and should simply be withdrawn.

"It goes against the process that the Prime Minister committed to which would be high-level talks dealing with the treaties as well as building capacity, community by community, as the Assembly of First Nations testified. It just doesn't work," Ms. Bennett told The Hill Times. "I think a lot of people feel it was well-intentioned, but it just is not the right way to go about this. Even to the point of amendments, we're very uncomfortable. You just can't fix this thing."

Ms. Crowder said the biggest problem is that it's a private member's bill attempting to tinker with the Indian Act, when it should be a government initiative.

"It does matter because it gives it more weight if it's a government bill. We've had too many private members bills introduced and languish so I'm presuming that if it passes that they'll repeal those sections, but why wouldn't the government do it? It would've been a win for the government," Ms. Crowder said.

"Either you're committed to the principle of consultation or you're not and one of the underlying problems with this bill is that consultation did not happen around the Indian Act. That's a problem," Ms. Crowder said.

Ms. Crowder also noted other flaws in the bill, including undefined terms around the minister's report to Parliament on progress on repealing the Indian Act and the provisions around the bylaws.

"The preamble in Clause 2, which talks about bringing this report to the House, has no definition, no qualifications, so the minister could conceivably just report back to the House that nothing's happening," she said. "It could be amended, but the way it's written now, it requires every First Nation to publish their bylaws in a

newspaper. No other level of government is required to do that. I was on municipal council, we didn't have to publish our full bylaws in the newspaper."

In her appearance before the committee, Ms. Wilson-Raybould also noted that repealing the "special reserves" section of the Indian Act which allows First Nations to add land to their territory could have unintended consequences.

"I'm not exactly sure what the intention was here in terms of special reserves, but what this seeks to do is limit the special reserves that exist, and limit it only to those reserves that existed prior to this bill coming into law, if it does. They wouldn't carry on into the future," she said.

"Certainly it has been a challenge for our nations to ensure that when land is either purchased or achieved through a settlement, there be the ability to add lands to the reserve that doesn't take some two to 15 years," Ms. Crowder said.

Mr. Clarke said that he is open to amendments that would allow for the Indian Act's repeal and replacement.

"I'm open to amendments that move us closer to the repeal and replacement of the Indian Act, and I'm also open to amendments that make the bill closer. What I hope to see is an open, frank discussion of this bill that bridges partisanship," he said.

"For me, it's not about the Conservatives or the Liberals or the NDP, and not about partisan ideology, but about starting a process that could transform the lives of so many First Nations people, especially the younger generation."

**First Nations home-manufacturer eyes Dryden location:
AlterNative homes builds housing panels that are resistant to
mould, mildew, water damage, fire**

[CBC News](#)

Posted: May 6, 2013 12:28 PM ET

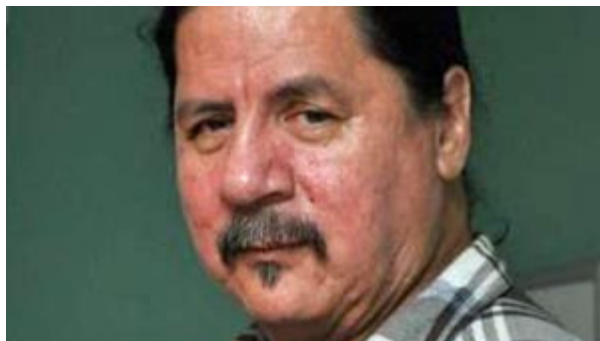


(istock)

AlterNative homes makes quick-build houses from panels of magnesium oxide — a hard material that's resistant to mould and mildew, water damage and fire. First Nations communities [that have declared states of emergency](#) due to inadequate housing are on its radar.

"There's such a demand for this," said Bernie Bird, president of the company.

"There's 85,000 homes needed across Canada for the First Nations. And this is something, I know once it does start, I believe it's gonna snowball."



Edmonton-based AlterNative Homes president Bernie Bird wants to establish a manufacturing site in Dryden because it's a good location from which to serve First Nations in Manitoba and Ontario. (Supplied)

Building a 'better home'

Bird said if all goes according to plan the company will begin construction of the Dryden manufacturing plant in the fall and open in the new year.

"Just listening to the news and other people talk that I've met in the past 3.5 years since I've started this company, there's just so much mould and unnecessary stuff that is actually going on through deliveries of other homes," Bird said.

"There's no need for it. We have the capability of building a better home and I just don't see why it hasn't come forward yet."

Up to 20 people could be employed at the plant.

Bird said the city of Dryden is behind this plan and is in the process of trying to secure grants through the Northern Ontario Heritage Fund. The Dryden location is ideal, he noted, because it's a good staging point from which to serve First Nations in both Manitoba and Ontario.

The "panel structure" homes are easy to transport and easy to put together. A 1,500 square foot home can be assembled in 2 days, he said.

The company has plans to train people from First Nations in how to put the homes together so communities can do the work themselves.

The homes cost \$85 to \$110 per square foot to build, which Bird says is inexpensive compared to the average home in Dryden which costs about \$260 per square foot.

Algonquins Call for Joint Review Panel for Proposed Matamec Rare Earth Elements Mine in Quebec

[NASDAQ](#)

5/6/2013 4:40:02 PM

Two Algonquin First Nations are calling for a Joint Review Panel on Matamec Exploration's (MAT.V) proposed Kipawa Rare Earth Elements open pit mine in Kipawa, Quebec.

The proposed mine site is located within, and has the potential to significantly affect, the shared traditional territories of our two First Nations, the Wolf Lake and Eagle Village groups said in a statement.

"Rare earth mines can be the source of significant toxics that risk being released to the environment including radioactive elements (uranium and thorium) and the poorly understood rare earth elements themselves. Existing regulatory regimes in Quebec and Canada have not been designed with rare earth elements in mind, pointing to the need for additional, closer scrutiny of the project."

Wolf Lake Chief Harry St. Denis stated: "We are concerned that the standard Environmental Assessment process will not adequately address our concerns about the potential for adverse environmental impacts from the Project. As it stands now, the mine does not trigger an environmental assessment under Quebec legislation so the federal Environmental Assessment will be the only one done for this proposed mine."

"We have determined that a Joint Review Panel pursuant to section 38 ([C](#)) of the CEAA with our Algonquin First Nation Governments would provide a much more

appropriate means of evaluating this Project and we have written to the federal Minister of the Environment Peter Kent calling on him to establish a Joint Review Panel."

Let natives care for kids: chiefs Autonomy would cut costs, inquiry told

[Winnipeg Free Press](#)

May 7, 2013

Carol Sanders

They took care of their kids prior to European contact for thousands of years and need to resume that control for the sake of child welfare, a spokesman for Manitoba chiefs told the inquiry into the death of Phoenix Sinclair Monday.

"It's left a bit of a tragic situation for many of our children and our families," said Norman Bone, who grew up at Keeseekoowenin Ojibway First Nation near Riding Mountain National Park. "Initially, we were independent and sustainable. We've since become dependent."

The longtime child welfare advocate, who has served as Keeseekoowenin's chief more than once, described the history of child welfare in Manitoba from first contact with Europeans to residential schools to the "60's scoop" of aboriginal children taken away for adoption to the current devolution of the child welfare system. It hasn't gone far enough, said Bone.

"We're finding extreme difficulty in being able to function in that system because it's one of dependency," Bone told the inquiry. The number of kids in care in Manitoba has grown to nearly 10,000 and more than 80 per cent are aboriginal.

"We just put brown faces in those chairs," he said. By "borrowing legislation" from existing governments, they haven't been able to author and approve their own child welfare legislation, he said at the inquiry that began in September. It was ordered by the province after Phoenix's 2005 death on Fisher River First Nation was discovered in 2006. The probe is to find out why it took so long for the five-year-old's death to be discovered, how the little girl in and out of care her whole life fell through Manitoba's child welfare safety net and what's been done or needs to be done to improve it.

Since 1870 and the creation of the Indian Act, First Nations' houses have been "emptied out" of their resources and responsibilities, Bone said. If original treaties were honoured, First Nations would have the resources to run their own child welfare systems again, he said.

"Prior to contact, we were self-governing," said Bone. The Ojibway survived long, severe winters like the one Manitoba just endured for thousands of years before colonization, he said to illustrate his point. "You couldn't have lived without being organized in such a way to survive and look after your family."

Restoring aboriginal autonomy can reduce the number of kids in care and save money, the inquiry heard. The West Region Child and Family Services' Vision Seekers program that ran in Skownan First Nation saved more than \$25 million, a report presented at the inquiry said. The program was set up from a holistic aboriginal family and community healing perspective. The program offered life-skills workshops, adult education, a community-centred therapy program and a career-trek program for young adolescents and their parents. It engaged children, adolescents, youth, parents and elders. The report said it returned \$6.20 in savings for every \$1 spent.

Restoring First Nations' control over their own kids is necessary to create a system that works, said Bone. New legislation might be similar to existing legislation but it should come from the people it's meant to govern, he said. Among Manitoba's 62 First Nations, there are several different tribes and languages spoken, but for effective child welfare systems to be in place, they need to reflect them, said Bone.

"If we're looking at having laws... we have to design (them)," said Bone.
"Hopefully it won't take 100 years."

Farmers, First Nations, cottagers rally on flood issues

[CBC News](#)

May 7, 2013 12:09 PM CT



Farmers and property owners around Lake Manitoba gathered for a protest at the Manitoba legislature building on Tuesday morning. (Sean Kavanagh/CBC)

There is more anger today over the way the Manitoba government has handled some flood issues.

Farmers are being joined for a protest at the Manitoba legislative grounds by cottage and land owners from around Lake Manitoba, as well as some First Nations.

More than 100 people in all are at the rally, demanding more and better compensation for their flooding losses and more effective drainage during flood season.

"We want the water bills of 2012 and beyond paid up and we want a permanent solution. We don't want Lake Manitoba [to be] a big drain to pour into Lake St. Martin and continue to give those First Nations people grief," said Joe Johnson, who helped organize the rally.

Farmers say their land near the Portage Diversion and Lake Manitoba has still not fully recovered from the 2011 flood, when the Portage Diversion ran at capacity to redirect as much water as it could from the Assiniboine River.

The diversion, which starts at an inlet near Portage la Prairie and moves the water 29 kilometres north to Lake Manitoba, saved the Winnipeg area from the roaring Assiniboine but the amount of water it fed into Lake Manitoba caused devastation to many other communities and farmland.

The lake levels rose so much that land within several kilometres of its shores was flooded out when windstorms pushed the water inland.

Jack King, who lives on the shore of Lake Manitoba, had his home destroyed by those storms.

"I think it's important to show this government that whether a cottager, a homeowner, a fisher; whether you are living in the north, east or west side of the lake, we are together on this," said King, who joined in the protest.

"We've been wronged and we expect the government to do right by us."

Things reached a head last week among some farmers who blocked the Portage Diversion with their vehicles to halt the province from using it again to lower levels on the Assiniboine.

The province got an injunction to remove the protestors and it now appears both sides are working on an agreement to avoid further conflict.

Emergency Measures Minister Steve Ashton met with some of the protestors at the legislature Tuesday to discuss their concerns.

CBC News will provide those details once they become available.

Half of Canada's foster children are aboriginals, national survey suggests

OTTAWA – Despite their growing numbers, Canada's young aboriginals are growing up in harsher circumstances than their non-aboriginal counterparts, newly released data from Statistics Canada shows.

In 2011, nearly half of Canada's 30,000 foster children aged 14 and under were aboriginal, according to results from the National Household Survey, released Wednesday.

That means nearly four per cent of aboriginal children were in foster care, compared to a scant 0.3 per cent of non-aboriginal children.

Less than half of aboriginal children lived in homes with both of their parents, compared to more than three-quarters of non-aboriginal children, according to the survey. And 34 per cent of aboriginal children – about 135,000 – lived in a lone-parent family; twice the ratio of non-aboriginal children. Most of those single parents are women.

"Particularly for young males, not having a strong male adult role model around is problematic," said Paul Maxim, a Western University sociology professor who studies the demographics of aboriginal peoples.

More than one-quarter of Canada's aboriginal population were 14 and under, and nearly one-fifth were aged 15 to 24, according to the voluntary survey, which replaced the mandatory long-form census the Conservative government scrapped in 2010.

Statisticians caution there is no way of knowing how good or bad the information is from the National Household Survey. The voluntary nature of the survey leaves gaps in the data from groups that tend not to respond to voluntary surveys, including aboriginals, new immigrants and low-income families. Experts believe the data should provide a fairly accurate broad scale picture of Canada, but that the smaller the group surveyed, the less reliable the information.

The NHS warns that certain factors should be taken into account when comparing data on aboriginal people over time, including differences in methodology in the National Household Survey as well as differences in the list of reserves incompletely surveyed.

In a case currently before the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal, the First Nations Child and Family Caring Society and the Assembly of First Nations allege that the federal government is discriminating against First Nations families and children by inadequately funding child welfare services on reserves.

Research cited by the AFN and the caring society indicates children on reserves receive 22-per-cent less funding per capita for services than those who live off reserves. That leads to more First Nations children placed in foster care, the groups say.

The case, launched in 2007, went through years of legal wrangling before tribunal hearings finally started earlier this year.

The rising numbers of aboriginal youth accompany the overall steady growth in First Nations, Metis and Inuit populations, which now number more than 1.4 million combined. That means aboriginals are 4.3 per cent of Canada's overall population, compared to 3.8 per cent in 2006 and 2.8 per cent in 1996.

Between 2006 and 2011, the aboriginal population increased at a rate of 20 per cent, compared to the five-per-cent increase in the non-aboriginal population. The median age of the aboriginal population in 2011 was 28, compared to 41 for non-aboriginals.

The younger population is due to higher fertility rates and shorter life expectancy among aboriginals, the survey says. It also notes that some people report their aboriginal identity or ancestry differently from one data collection to another, for a variety of reasons.

Experts have noted that legislative changes, court rulings and the combination of an increase in indigenous pride and decreased discrimination have prompted many people report their aboriginal ancestry.

The data regarding family circumstances of aboriginal children also underscore the importance, highlighted by recent studies, that the circumstances of early childhood can have on later educational performance.

"If the kids are not fully developed by the time they get to age five, you're giving yourself a huge uphill battle from that point on. It's extremely difficult to overcome the challenges in those early years," said University of Saskatchewan Prof. Ken Coates, Canada Research Chair in regional innovation and an expert on aboriginal

issues. "That is not a place that governments or First Nations have really found effective measures."

Coates said improving conditions for aboriginal children in their earliest years will be the "critical factor" in policymakers' efforts to tackle the population surge.

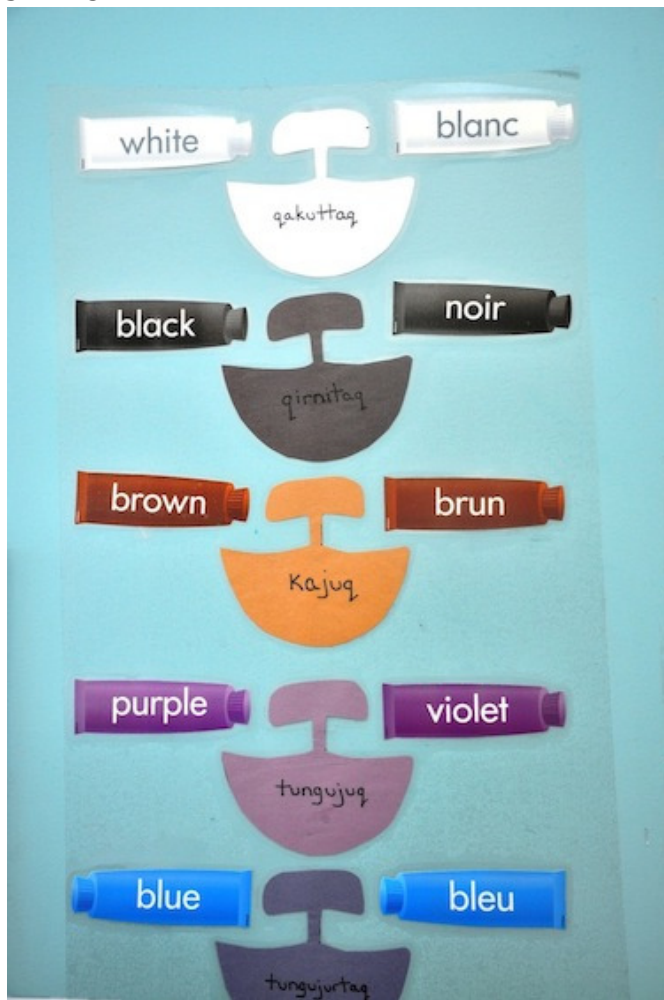
"If you look 25 years down the line, whether or not we can deal with the zero-to-fives, I believe, is going to be a test of whether government policies and First Nations self government have been effective."

Less than two in three Inuit speak an Inuit language: StatsCan About 27 per cent of Inuit live outside traditional homelands

[Nunatsiaq Online](#)

May 8, 2013

Jim Bell



The Rising Sun childcare centre in the Montreal borough of Verdun operates in three languages — English, French and Inuktitut. But of the roughly 16,000 Inuit who live outside Inuit Nunangat, only one in 10 report the ability to speak an Inuit language. (FILE PHOTO)



An inuksuk stands in front of one of the buildings owned by Tungasuvvingat Inuit, the Ottawa-based community centre for Inuit, which serves an estimated population of about 735, some of the 15,980 Inuit who now live outside traditional Inuit homelands, StatsCan reported May 8.(FILE IMAGE)

Less than two of every three Inuit in Canada — about 37,615 people — are able to conduct a conversation in the Inuit language, Statistics Canada reports. That number is contained in [a big release of data](#) May 8 that Statistics Canada gathered during its 2011 household survey.

StatsCan number-crunchers estimate Canada's Inuit population at 59,445 for 2011.

Of those, 43,460 Inuit, about 73 per cent of the total, live in Inuit Nunangat, defined as the Nunatsiavut, Nunavik, Nunavut and the Inuvialuit regions.

The other 27 per cent — 15,980 Inuit — live outside traditional Inuit homelands, StatsCan reported.

On language use, StatsCan found 63.3 per cent of the Inuit population is able to converse in an Inuit language. That's down from 68.8 per cent in 2006.

And though the Inuit population in Canada grew 18.1 per cent between 2006 and 2011, the raw number of Inuit able to speak an Inuit language grew by only 8.6 per cent.

A small number of Inuit, about 250, report the ability to speak Cree or Innu-Montagnais languages.

StatsCan's numbers suggest the Inuit language is healthiest in Nunavik, where 99.1 per cent of the region's Inuit population of 10,755 report the ability to speak an Inuit language.

And Inuit language use is still fairly strong in Nunavut, where 89 per cent, or 24,090 Inuit, report the ability to conduct a conversation in an Inuit language.

But only 24.9 per cent of Inuit in the Nunatsiavut region and 20.1 per cent of Inuit in the Inuvialuit region of the Northwest Territories are able to converse in an Inuit language.

And of the roughly 16,000 Inuit who live outside Inuit Nunangat, only one in 10 report the ability to speak an Inuit language.

StatsCan found that of the country's large urban population centres, Edmonton holds the largest Inuit population: 1,115.

The agency counted 900 Inuit in Montreal, 735 in Ottawa, 735 in Yellowknife and 680 in St. John's.

StatsCan also found that Canada's Aboriginal population is booming, having grown by 20.1 per cent between 2006 and 2011, while the non-Aboriginal population grew by 5.2 per cent.

They found that 1.4 million people in Canada reported an Aboriginal identity in 2011: 851,560 First Nations people, 451,795 Métis and 59,445 Inuit.

And it's a young population: 28 per cent of the Aboriginal population are children under the age of 14 and 18.2 per cent are youth aged 15 to 24.

Among First Nations, 22.4 per cent report the ability to converse in an Aboriginal language. Only 2.5 per cent of Métis speak an Aboriginal language.

The Inuit population in Canada is the youngest, with a median age of only 23. "Median age" means that half of all Inuit are under 23.

Here are the 2011 Inuit population counts for the four Inuit regions and the rest of Canada, with the relative proportion of each:

- Nunavut: 27,070 (45.5 per cent)
- Nunavik: 10,750 (18.1 per cent)
- Inuvialuit region: 3,310 (5.6 per cent)
- Nunatsiavut: 2,325 (3.9 per cent)
- Outside Inuit Nunangat: 15,980 (26.9 per cent)

Statistics Canada cautions that because the 2011 household survey was voluntary, their statistics could be subject to a greater number of potential errors caused by a higher non-response rate.

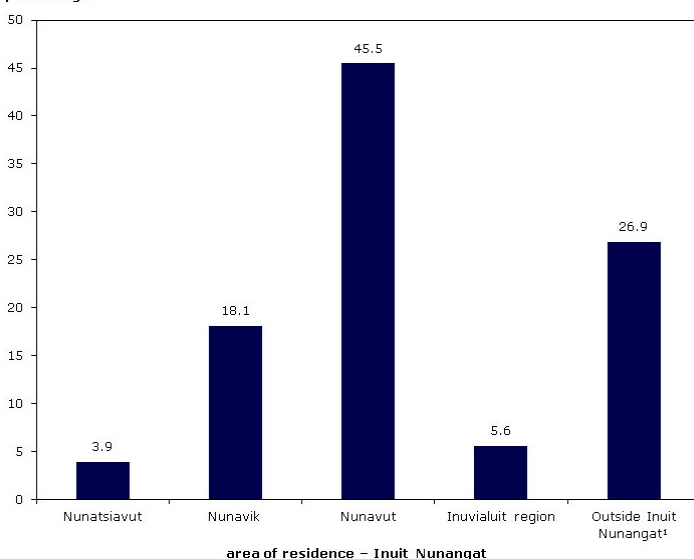
That's because the Conservative government's controversial decision to eliminate mandatory compliance with the household survey.

It's estimated the non-compliance rate in 2011 could be as high as 30 per cent.

Statistics Canada also cautions that some of their First Nations numbers could contain more errors because of non-compliance and the refusal by some First Nations to allow StatsCan workers onto their territory.

They also caution that estimates of Inuit living outside Inuit Nunangat may be subject to error because of the small size of the total number.

Figure 2
Distribution of the Inuit population by area of residence – Inuit Nunangat, Canada, 2011
percentage



This Statistics Canada graphic shows the largest proportion of Inuit in Canada — 45.5 per cent — live in Nunavut. But the second-largest, 26.9 per cent, live outside traditional Inuit homelands. (STATISTICS CANADA IMAGE)

1. Data for Inuit outside of Inuit Nunangat, as it represents less than 1% of the Canadian population, should be used with caution because of lower reliability.

Note: Refer to Box 6: Concepts and definitions at the end of the document for concepts and definitions.

Source: Statistics Canada, National Household Survey, 2011.

Youth seek to revive at-risk aboriginal languages: Native dialects less often mother tongues, survey suggests

[Vancouver Sun](#)

May 9, 2013

Kelly Sinoski



Les Bazo Student Audrey Siegl says she never had a chance to speak with her grandparents in their native tongue. Now she's trying to learn the Musqueam language at the UBC Faculty of Arts. Photograph by: Les Bazo, PNG, Vancouver Sun

Audrey Siegl waited 35 years to speak the words of her ancestors.

Now the Musqueam First Nations member

spends her days going through old texts and audio recordings to help preserve the language before it's lost forever.

"We don't have any elders left, there is no option," said Siegl, 39, who studied the aboriginal language at UBC. "There's this one little boy ... I see him switching back and forth effortlessly between Musqueam and English. He, and the other boys, have the ability to make us completely fluent."

B.C. aboriginals like Siegl are twice as likely to learn their traditional language as a second language than the rest of Canada's aboriginals, according to a 2011 voluntary national household survey. The survey found a two-per-cent drop in aboriginal languages in Canada between 2006 and 2011, which was mostly related to those who speak the language as their mother tongue.

On the other hand, the interest in aboriginal language is increasing as a second language.

In B.C., for instance, the number of aboriginals who can converse in an aboriginal language dropped by 20 per cent from 2006-2011, with only six per cent - or 15,000 people - able to speak the language in 2011.

There was a 36 per cent decline, however, in the number of people who spoke aboriginal as their mother tongue. At the same time, the number of those learning it as a second language rose 10.5 per cent.

"There's a decline among those who have it as a first language but for those with it as a second language, it's increasing," said Stephanie Langlois, a senior analyst with Stats Canada.

Across Canada, about 241,000 people - or 17.2 per cent of the aboriginal population - speak an aboriginal language. Of those, about 202,500 speak it as their mother tongue.

There was a 5.3 per cent drop in those who said they speak a traditional aboriginal language as their first language. But there was an increase of about 5,700 people - or 12.7 per cent - reporting they could speak it as a second language.

"(B.C.) has the greatest proportion of people that know it as a second language," Langlois said. "Probably for the language's survival, this is the best situation. If you have these people learning it as a second language, it helps revitalize the language and preserve it."

For Siegl, learning the language was the first step in finding herself. As a child, she felt ashamed of being native. Her mother spent her childhood years in a residential school, and she and her sister were teased about being native.

"I was tired of being ashamed of being an Indian," she said. "I needed to know about my culture and language is the first step. It was a really emotional road. I'm now trying to help my community members learn the language and get in touch with the things we lost along the way so we can be whole again."

Paul Michel, an adjunct professor in First Nations Studies at the University of Northern B.C., said there has been a rise in aboriginal language courses, especially at the elementary school level. The Chief Atahm School at Sexqeltqin (Adams Lake Reserve) in Chase, for instance, is a full immersion language school.

"They're finally realizing our elders, who are our language speakers, are going, they're passing away," he said. "Most of the languages are at the threat of extinction in B.C."

Schools like Chief Atahm are a good model to follow, he said, but noted with 200 First Nations bands in B.C., they're not all at the same level.

"The success I've seen is when the community itself puts it at top priority," he said.

Michel said there's also a question of fluency related to those studying the language as a second language.

Dr. Patricia Shaw, of the University of B.C.'s First Nations Languages program, agreed, noting aboriginal languages across the country are in decline and "in some cases in B.C. are much more critical."

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BC Treaty First Nation Governments Call for Equal Access to Financing

[Canada Newswire](#)

May 9, 2013

Seven British Columbia First Nations are calling on the Provincial Government and political leaders to commit to providing equal access to low-cost financing for public infrastructure construction.

The seven First Nations (Huu-ay-aht, Ka:'yu:'k't'h/Chek'tles7et'h', Toquaht, Uchucklesaht and Yuułu?ıł?ath, Tsawwassen, and Tla'Amin) have completed, or virtually completed, the Treaty process establishing them as First Nation Governments.

"Our challenge is that we, as self-governing First Nations, don't have access to low-cost public infrastructure financing for our communities. Indian Act First Nations can access the First Nations Finance Authority (FNFA), and municipalities in BC can access the Municipal Finance Authority (MFA)" said Clint Williams, Chief of the Tla'amin First Nation. "But we don't have access to either one, and it is impeding our ability to build important services for our communities."

"As new governments with new laws, regulations and development plans coming into place to grow our economies, we need supporting infrastructure such as water, sewer, transportation and power," said Chief Williams. "All we're asking for is the same access non-Treaty First Nations and BC municipalities are getting."

For access to FNFA funding, changes would need to be made to the BC Treaty First Nation Taxation Act. Amendments to the First Nation-BC taxing agreements, known as "Real Property Tax Co-ordination Agreements" would also be required.

For access to the Municipal Finance Authority funding, the BC Government would need to authorize membership in the MFA and amend any required laws and agreements.

"We're not asking for a free ride," said Chief Williams. "We are committed to operating as governments with all of the finance, service and tax requirements that go with that. Our Nations are committed to become joint and severally liable with either borrowing group. We recognize that we need to provide financial oversight and intervention mechanisms as a function of joining a borrowing pool."

"We are currently in the process of seeking commitment of the leaders of the major parties in BC during this election period, and look forward to working with the BC Government after the election is over in May."

SOURCE: Tsawwassen First Nation

Turtle Lodge Treaty Signing

[Net Newsledger](#)

May 9, 2013



Treaty signing at the Turtle Lodge

SAGKEENG FIRST NATION - On May 6 and 7, 2013, individuals from the Anishnaabe, Siksi kai' tsi tapi (Blackfoot), Nehiyaw (Cree), Dakota, Lakota, Nakota, Nisga'a, and Mi'kmaw Nations, and from a number of Indigenous educational institutions, gathered inside the Turtle Lodge in Sagkeeng First Nation, Manitoba, for discussion and

ceremony to make a sacred promise to each other in the presence of the Creator.

Turtle Lodge Treaty Re-Establishment of Relationships

In a profoundly historic event, the relationship of Treaty amongst our own peoples and Nations was re-established.

Our ancestors practiced the purest form of democracy, one in which every individual had the opportunity to express themselves, women, men and children.

The Turtle Lodge Treaty: "Our Way of Life" (Indigenous Education) was signed, as an expression of Indigenous jurisdiction over education, by sovereign individuals – women, men, youth, and leadership – from a number of Indigenous Nations.

"Our Indigenous Knowledge is based on our spiritual connection to Creator, the relationship to the land we inherit and how we survive within our ecosystems: medicines, plants, animals, land, sky, water, and all of Creation," states the Treaty.

The Turtle Lodge Treaty was named at the request of the Elders, to acknowledge the host Lodge of the gathering. The Turtle Lodge is also situated near the recognized geographic centre of the continent of North America, very close to the sacred site of Manitou Api, "Where the Creator Sits".

It was agreed that the Treaty be shared with all the people, to give everyone the opportunity to sign their name either as

- a) sovereign individuals,
- b) as representatives of Indigenous educational institutions, or
- c) as representatives of Nations.

The Turtle Lodge Treaty was made a living document through spiritual ceremony. Pipe ceremonies and water ceremonies were conducted, and special songs were sung on the sacred drums by women and men, to carry the message of the Treaty around the world. The Treaty document was placed in the water at the mouth of Lake Winnipeg, where the river water systems all the way from the west coast, the south and the east, converge into the Winnipeg River at Sagkeeng First Nation. Sagkeeng means "mouth of the river." From there the waters flow into Lake Winnipeg, which in turn pours into the Hudson Bay and the major Arctic, Atlantic and Pacific Ocean systems.

A gift of a carved stone bear was presented to the Turtle Lodge to acknowledge the Lodge's role in hosting the gathering.

The Turtle Lodge Treaty will be shared shortly with everyone, to give all an opportunity to offer their commitment and support to the spirit of its principles.

First Nations protecting boreal forest

[Wawatay News](#)

May 9, 2013

Christian Quequich

A project to protect the boreal forest for future generations, known as the Pimachiowin Aki World Heritage Project, began in 2006. Seven years later that project may result in northern Ontario's first UNESCO world heritage site, if an expected decision falls the right way.

The project aims to "achieve international recognition for 33,400 square kilometres of land in Manitoba and Ontario as a UNESCO world heritage site," and a decision from UNESCO is expected any day now.

Alex Peters, a member of Pikangikum First Nation and co-chair of the Pimachiowin Aki World Heritage project said the project was initiated by the community Elders.

"They wanted to designate a site for the whole world to see that our land is beautiful," said Peters. "Our Elders went down river to see if there was any other interested communities that would join hands with us and we found our relatives down river from us at Little Grand Rapids, Pauingassi, Poplar River and a couple years back Bloodvein River."

Together, the five communities approached the Manitoba and Ontario provincial governments to secure "world heritage status for the largest protected-area network in the North American boreal shield," according to the press release.

Peters said that despite the provincial backing, they have had no support from Aboriginal Affairs.

"The department that is supposed to help us, INAC, hasn't put a cent towards this project. A couple of years back we met with them and we asked them if they would support this project," said Peters. "They said no. No, and no. They gave us three no's. We've managed to come this far without their support, we've been at this since 2006, so almost 10 years."

Peters said they should expect an answer from UNESCO any day now.

The press release reads that the UNESCO nomination process includes community consultations, research, mapping and land management planning.

The nomination for this project was sent in January of 2012, and "the decision-making process generally takes 18 months."

Gord Jones is the project manager for the Pimachiowin Aki World Heritage project. He said the First Nations people came together among the thousands to cooperate with the provincial government towards protecting their land and supporting their culture.

"With their leadership, a formal partnership was formed in 2006 and these groups have been working together through a non-profit corporation to complete a UNESCO world heritage site nomination package," said Jones. "There's been a process of evaluation going on and there is a meeting with the world heritage committee in June this year where there will be a final determination."

He said this is an opportunity to conserve the area for the future and that is part of the communities' motivation, to take care of the land and protect it. He added that by doing this, they are able to maintain their cultural traditions and use of their land for hunting, fishing, gathering and for spiritual purposes.

"I am pleased that Ontario and Manitoba are working together to protect and manage the proposed Pimachiowin Aki site in conjunction with our First Nation partners in both provinces," said David Oraziotti of the Ministry of Natural Resources Ontario. "This area of boreal forest provides an important habitat to a number of species and holds great significance to the traditional Aboriginal way of life. Ontario is proud to support Pimachiowin Aki as a UNESCO World Heritage site."

Manitoba's minister of conservation and stewardship, Gord Mackintosh said the agreement between the two provincial governments and the five First Nation communities is "an important step toward ensuring the heart of the last intact forest of its kind left in the world is protected and managed for generations."